

Uncle Terry

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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had many times been sold willingly in the most nefarious transactions. A client was to him a victim to be kept in waiting, exasperated in regard to his grievances by all possible means, deluded as to his chances of success in quest of justice, deceived as to its cost and robbed in every way known to an astute lawyer.

He had been the legal adviser of John Nason for many years, and when that busy merchant came to him on behalf of his son, who wanted to find a position for Albert Page, Frye readily promised to give him employment. It was not because he needed him, but because he saw at once that through some friendship for this young sprig of the law, as he intuitively considered Albert to be, he could strengthen his hold upon the father and obtain some secrets that might eventually be used to rob him. In plain words, he thought to use this young country lawyer as a spy. He knew that John Nason felt a keen interest in his only son Frank, and that was another reason for employing that son's friend. He knew also that Frank was given a liberal allowance, spent it rapidly and most likely would be getting into various scrapes needing a lawyer's efforts to rescue him, and so he would have further pickings in that direction. These were two good reasons for his ostensible acts of kindness, and so he at once went for Page to come.

When, the morning after his arrival in Boston, Albert presented himself at Frye's office, he found that lawyer busy reading his mail.

"Take a seat, sir," said Frye politely, after Albert had introduced himself, "and excuse me until I go through my letters." And then for a long half hour Albert was left to study the bare office walls and peculiar looks of his future employer. Finally Frye turned to him and asked rather abruptly, "Well, Mr. Page, what do you know about law?" at the same time scanning him as if expecting to see hayseed adhering to his garments.

"Not much, perhaps," replied Albert modestly, uncertain of his ground. "I have been in practice only a year at Sandgate, and the few people there do not have much use for a lawyer."

"Then why didn't you stir 'em up a little and bring 'em to see the need of your services?" was Frye's next question. "You seem to be a lawyer unless you mindlessness. Did you bring your sheepskin with you?"

"No, sir," answered Page. "I didn't think it necessary after what I wrote you. I have it in my trunk."

"Well, bring it tomorrow," said Frye. "I make it a rule to take nothing for granted and have everything in writing." And then he added, with a searching look, as if he was about to utter a crusher, "What is your idea of a lawyer's chief object in existence?"

Page was a little nonplused. "Oh, I suppose," he replied slowly, "to see that laws are properly executed and justice done."

Frye looked at him a full minute without making any further comment, while a sardonic grin gradually drew his lips apart, showing a full set of false teeth, and then, as he began rubbing his hands together, he said:

"It's evident, young man, you have much to learn in your profession. Laws are made for lawyers and are the tools of our trade. If the world does not see fit to use those tools, it is our business to make them, and, as for justice, that is an allegory, useful in addressing a jury, but considered a fable by the judge. Laws are useful to oppose oth-

way slightly disgusted, but he was not in a position to cavil or feel squeamish over apparent lack of honesty and resolved at once to ignore it.

"What do you wish me to do?" he continued after a moment. "I will do the best I can for you and am ready to go to work now."

"You are to be at the office at 8 o'clock sharp," replied Frye, "take one hour for lunch and remain till 6." Then he added by way of a spur to his slave's fidelity: "I am paying you \$75 a month on the recommendation of an important client of mine who wanted to humor his son. It was your good luck to have this son's friendship, as he belongs to a wealthy family. He is a spendthrift, of course, but that is no matter and all the better for us. Take my advice and cultivate him all you can. It may be the means of bringing us more business. What I say to you I shall expect you to consider a professional secret, and I hope you will make good use of your time when with this young friend of yours and heed well what I have said to you."

That ended the interview, and Albert was set at work copying legal documents and at the same time trying to reconcile himself to his new surroundings. That night he wrote to Alice: "I have hired out to a most unmitigated old scoundrel and yet one of the sharpest lawyers I ever met. He assured me I must lay aside my conscience if I mean to succeed, and hinted that he might use me later on as a sort of spy, upon Frank, I imagine. He employs a stenographer of uncertain age, who comes in and takes dictation and does her work outside. The only stupid thing he has said was to warn me not to flirt with her."

Then he wrote to his friend Frank, telling him where he was located, thanking him for his assistance and begging him to call at an early date. After that he smoked for an hour in glum silence. His room was small and cheerless and in comparison with his home quarters a mere den. But it was a question of saving, and the luxury of space even he could not afford. There is no more lonesome place in the wide world than a great city to one born and bred amid the freedom of the wide fields and extended woodlands, as Albert had been, and now that he was shut in by brick walls all day and imprisoned in one small room at night, with a solitary window opening on an area devoted to ash barrels and garbage, it made him homesick.

He was a dreamer by nature and loved the music of running brooks, the rustling of winds in the forest and the song of birds. The grand old mountains that surrounded Sandgate had been the delight of his boyhood, and to fish in the clear streams that tumbled down through narrow gorges and wound amid wide meadows or in the lily dotted millpond his pastime. He had the artist's nature in him also and loved dearly to sketch a pretty bit of natural scenery, a cascade in the brook or a shady grotto in the woods. He loved books, flowers, music, green meadows, shady woods and fields white with daisies. He had been reared among kind hearted, honest, God fearing people who seldom locked their doors at night and who believed in and lived by the Golden Rule. The selfish and distrustful life of a great city, with its arrogance and wealth and vanity of display, was not akin to him, and to put himself at the beck and call of a mercenary and utterly unscrupulous old villain, as he believed Frye to be, was gall and bitterness. For two weeks he worked patiently, hoping each day that the one and only friend the city held for him would call, passing his evenings, as he wrote Alice, "in reading, smoking and hating myself a little and Frye a good deal."

He had hesitated to write Frank in the first place, disliking to ask favors, but it could not be helped, and now he began to feel that his friend meant to ignore him. This humiliating conclusion was growing to a certainty and Albert feeling more homesick than ever when one afternoon while he was, as usual, hard at work in Frye's office Frank came in.

"Pray excuse me, old man," remarked that youth briskly after the first greetings, "for not calling sooner, but I was off on my yacht about the time you came, and then I ran down to New York to take in the cup races. You see, I'm so busy I do not get any time to myself. I want you to come over to the club and lunch with me today, and we can talk matters over."

"You will kindly excuse me," replied Albert. "I have a lot of work cut out and am only allowed one hour for lunch. Can't you come around to my room tonight and have a smoke talk?"

"Maybe," replied Frank, "and we can go around to the club later. You will meet some good fellows there, and we always make up a game of draw—small limit, you know. Say, old man," he added interestedly, "how do you like Frye?"

As that worthy happened to be out just then the two friends had a good chance to exchange opinions. Albert's is already known, but, for reasons, he did not care to express it to Frank at this time.

"Frye is a shrewd lawyer, I presume," he answered, "and so far I have no fault to find. He takes good care to see I have work enough, but that is what I am hired for, and I have been rather lonesome and glad of it."

Then to change the subject he added: "I want to thank you once more, Frank, for getting me the place. Things were in a bad way at home, and I needed it."

"You may thank dad, not me," replied Frank. "I was just going off on a trip when your letter came, and I turned the matter over to him. Frye's his attorney, you see."

"Are you personally well acquainted with Mr. Frye?" asked Albert, having an object in mind.

"No, not at all, except by sight," was the answer. "I believe he is considered a very sharp lawyer and almost invariably wins his cases. Dad says he has won out many times when the law was all against him and is not overscrupulous how he does it. They say he is rich and a skindint. He always reminds me of a hungry buzzard."

Albert thought of Burns' apt cynicism just then and wished that Frye might for one moment see himself as others saw him. He felt tempted to tell Frank just what Frye had said and what his opinion of him was, but wisely kept it to himself.

"Well, I must be going," said Frank at last. "I've got a date for the mat. This aft., so-t-a. I'll call round some eve. at your room and take you up to the club."

When his friend had departed, Albert resumed his rather monotonous copying the gist of a lot of decisions bearing upon a case that Frye had pending just then, and when he went out to lunch it was, as usual, alone and to a cheap restaurant.

"It's nice to have a rich father, a yacht, plenty of money and nothing to do but spend it," he said to himself ruefully that night as he sat in his cheerless room smoking and dwelling upon the picture of a gay life as disclosed by his friend. "But we are not all born to fortune, and perhaps, after all, I might be worse off," which, to say the least, is the best way to look at it.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN, a few days after Frank had called upon Page, the latter chanced to mention it to Frye, he made a note of it.

"I am glad," he said cordially, "that your friend has hunted you up. I knew he was away on his yacht when you came and was going to suggest that you call on him as soon as I knew he was at home. As I told you, cultivate him all you can. He will serve as a door to get you into good society. When did he call?"

"It was one day while you were out," answered Page, "and he invited me to lunch with him at his club."

"Which, of course, you did," said Frye.

"No, sir—I knew I shouldn't have time for it during my one hour, and, then, you had given me a lot of work to do that day."

A shade of annoyance came over Frye's face.

"Well, that's all right, of course," he said, "but when he calls again take all the time you need if he asks you out, and," with a scrutinizing look at Page, "as I said, cultivate him. It's business. His father is my most valued client, and the more intimate you become with his son the sooner you will have an acquaintance that will be of value to you."

Page could not quite fathom all this, but the more he thought of what Frye had said the more certain he became



He found himself being introduced by his first name.

that kindly regard for his own welfare did not enter into that shrewd schemer's calculations. He was more and more disgusted also each day with his employer's cynical indifference to all sense of honor and honesty, coming to the conclusion that he was no better than a thief at heart.

Beneath Albert's disposition to adapt himself to those he mingled with lay a vein of sterling good sense, fine honor and the energy of self sacrifice. If necessary, and Frye's attributes were so obnoxious to him as to be simply repulsive. At college he had never indulged in much "larking," and just why the bond of friendship between himself and the good natured, self indulgent, happy go lucky classmate, Frank Nason, had been cemented is hard to explain, except upon the theory of an attraction of opposites.

When, a few days later, that young man appeared at the office just before closing time and suggested they "go out for a night's racket," as he phrased it, Albert was not inclined to accept.

"What are you up to?" he said as they walked away from the office, "and what do you mean by a racket? If it's likely to be expensive, count me out; I can't afford it."

"Well," answered Frank lightly, "you are working too hard and need shaking up, so I thought I'd drop round and do it. We will dine at the club, then go to the opera house, where there is a burlesque on and no end of pretty chorus girls. I know two or three of them, and after the show we will take them out to supper."

"It's all right except the end-up," answered Albert, "and on that I think you had best skip me. As I said, it's a diversion I can't afford. I've no money to spare to buy wine for ballet girls."

"Oh, that's all right," responded Frank cheerfully. "I've asked you out, and it's my treat. I'll pay the shot this time."

"I shall pay my share if I go," asserted Albert firmly, "but I would rather omit the after part. We will have the evening together, and then you can go and entertain your chorus girls, and I'll go to my room."

It was a laudable resolution, but it came hard, for beneath all Albert's good resolves was lurking desire for a little excitement to break the dull monotony of his life. He had been to the theater only twice since he came to Boston, desiring to save in every way he could, and only the week before had sent Alice one-third of his first month's salary. At the club Frank introduced him to several of his friends, and of course they were asked to join them in a social glass, which did not tend to

strengthen Albert's resolution. At the theater the exhilarating music and the glitter of a stage full of pretty girls had their effect, and by the time the show was over he found it impossible to resist his friend's urging that they go around to the stage door and meet the girls he had invited to sup with them.

"Mind you, let me pay my share," whispered Page, and then he found himself being introduced by his first name to two highly colored queens of the ballet, and all four proceeded at once to a private supper room. Albert found the girls bright, vivacious and expressive, as far as a superficial use of slang goes. They ordered the choicest and highest priced items on the bill of fare and talked about their "mashes" in other cities in a way that made Albert grateful that he had been introduced by his first name only.

When in the wee small hours they escorted the two girls to their boarding place, Page was glad to be rid of them, and when he reached his room he did not feel particularly proud of himself.

He felt less so the next morning when he received a letter from Alice which read:

My Darling Brother—I was so pleased when I received your love letter and the money you sent. You do not know how it hurts me to feel as you so much, and I have cried over it more than you will ever know. Last week I received my first month's pay—\$50—and I was very proud of it, for it is the first money I ever earned. I took half and put it with the twenty-five you sent and gave it to Mr. Hobbs. I have only \$25 left, for I had to buy some boots and gloves, but that will last me a month, for I've not the heart to spend a penny I am not obliged to until the debts are paid. I had to buy the boots because walking four miles a day wears them out very fast.

And he had spent \$20 the night before to hear a couple of ballet girls talk slang!

CHAPTER VI.

PAGE was a little late at the office the next morning, and Frye was there ahead of him.

"I was out with young Nason last evening," he explained as the old lawyer bade him a rather crusty good morning, "and I overslept."

"Oh, that is all right," responded Frye in an instantaneously sweetened tone. "I am glad you were, and, as I told you, you are wise to cultivate him. I suppose," he continued, with a leer, "that you were buying wine for some of the gay girls?"

Page looked confused. "Well, we went to the theater and after that had a late supper," he explained, "and it was after 1 before I returned to my room."

"I don't care how late you are out or what you did," said Frye, still eying Page, "so long as you were with young Nason and kept out of the lock-up. His father pays me a salary to look after his business, and his son is the pride of his heart. I trust you understand my meaning. If you don't feel like work this morning," he continued suavely, "mount your wheel and take a run out to Winchester and see if that mortgage on the Seaver estate has been satisfied. The exercise and air will do you good."

Page was nonplused.

"He has some deep laid plot in his mind," he thought as he looked at Frye. He was glad to escape the office, however, for his head felt full of bees, and, thanking his employer for the permission, he quickly left the city behind him. The crisp October air and exercise soon drove away some of the self reproaches at his own foolish conduct of the night before.

The errand at Winchester was attended to, and then he headed back for the city, taking another course. By the time he reached town he was faint from hunger, for he had eaten no breakfast. A good dinner restored him to his natural self possession, and then he went to the office.

For a week he reproached himself every time he thought how much his escapade had cost and felt too ashamed to answer Alice's letter. When he did he assured that innocent sister that he was saving all he could and should send more money as soon as possible. Frank called twice and the second time urged him to join the club, to which Page assented.

"It will serve as a place to spend a lonesome evening," he thought. Several times Frye had made casual inquiries as to the progress of his in-

timacy with young Nason, all of which led Page to wonder what his object was and why it concerned him. At last, one day at closing time and after he had told the office boy he might go, Frye let Alice light into that enigma.

"Sit down a moment, Mr. Page," he remarked as the latter was preparing to leave. "I have a proposition of an important nature to make to you." And then as he fixed his merciless eyes on his clerk and began to slowly rub his hands together he continued: "You have been nearly three months in my employ, Mr. Page, and have fulfilled your duties satisfactorily. I think the time has come when I may safely enlarge them a little. As I told you, John Nason pays me a yearly retainer to attend to all his law business. I have reason to feel he is not entirely satisfied to continue that arrangement, and I am forced to find some way to bring a little pressure to bear on him in order that he may see it is for his interest to still retain me."

"Now, I believe John Nason is not entirely happy in his home relations, and that a certain young lady receives a share of his attentions. While they are never seen in public together, gossip links their names. What I want is for you to find out through your acquaintance with the Nasons just what bond there is between the elder Nason and the young lady and report to me. I do not intend to use the knowledge for any illegal purpose, but merely as a leverage to retain Nason's business. I am aware that to prosecute your inquiries discreetly by means of your intimacy with young Nason will require more money than I am paying you, and therefore, if I can depend on you to do a little detective work, I shall from now on increase your salary from \$75 to \$175. What do you say?"

The first impulse that Page felt was to absolutely refuse there and then to have anything to do with Frye's nefarious scheme, but the thought of his situation, the unpaid debt at home and the certainty that a refusal would mean a loss of his position, conquered his pride and kept him silent. For a moment he reflected, trying hard to see a way out of the dilemma, and then said:

"It is rather a hard task you ask, Mr. Frye, for I am not accustomed to the role of detective, but I am in your employ, and as long as I am I will do the best I can for your interests."

It was a temporizing reply, and Frye so construed it at once.

"I must insist if you accept my offer," he said, "that you give me your promise to do your best to earn the money. It doesn't pay to be too squeamish in this world," he continued in a solemn tone. "All business is to a certain extent a game of extortion—a question of do the other fellow or he will do you." Then arising and holding out a skinny hand to grasp Page's, he added, "I shall expect you to keep faith with me, Mr. Page," and the interview ended.

When Albert met Frank at the club that evening he was preoccupied and morose, and Frank, noticing his frame of mind, tried to cheer him.

"You look as if you had been given a facer, old man," he said. "What is the matter? Has Frye been calling you down for something?"

Page looked at his friend a moment, and the impulse to make a clean breast of it and relieve his feelings was strong, but he did not.

"I do not like Frye," he said instead, "and the more I see of him the less I like him. At times he makes me feel as if he was a snake ready to uncoil and strike. Have you ever noticed his eyes and the way he has of rubbing his hands when talking?"

"I have," was the answer, "and he has the most hideous eyes I ever saw in a human being. They look like a cat's in the dark. Dad told me once he saw Frye look at a witness he was cross examining in such a way that the poor fellow forgot what his name was and swore black was white. Those eyes are vicious weapons, they say, and he uses them to the utmost when he wants to scare a witness."

"They make me feel creepy every time I look at them," said Albert, and then, as if anxious to change the subject, he added: "Let's leave here, Frank, and you come with me to my room, where we can have a quiet talk together. I am in the dumps tonight and want to unbosom my troubles to you."

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT ails you, old man?" asked Frank after they were seated in Albert's room and were smoking fraternal pipes. "You look as if you had lost your best friend."

"I did, last June, as you know," was the rather sad answer, "and on top of that I hate myself for one or two things—for instance, the escapade we indulged in the other night, and being Frye's slave, for another."

"I am sorry for the first," responded Frank. "It was my fault that you were coaxed into it. I won't do it again, I assure you. Don't worry over it, my boy. It wasn't anything serious; only just a little after theater fun and hearing those sporty girls talk slang."

"Yes, and spending a lot of money for very poor fun," replied Albert. "I don't think any better of myself for doing it, do you?"

"Oh, I don't think about it one way or the other," answered Frank. "I have so much time to kill, and that's no worse than any other way."

"Well, of course it's all right, and as you do not think any the less of yourself for doing it there is no harm," replied Albert. "Only I do, and so it is worse for me than for you."

"Now, you have a mother and sisters who think well of you, no doubt. How would you have felt to have had any one of them peep in that night and see what manner of company you were in?"

My mother is in her grave, but maybe she could see where I was and with whom I was that evening, and I thought makes me feel mean. I have a sister, one of the purest and sweetest little women God ever blessed the earth with, and not for all that I can earn in one year would I have her know what a foolish thing I did. For two days I was so ashamed of myself I felt miserably."

Frank sat in stupefied silence at his friend's outburst. "If I had imagined you were going to feel that way, old man," he said at last, "I would never have urged you to go with me. I never will again, I assure you."

"Oh, I am as much to blame as you," observed Albert. "I went willingly, but after it was all over I was sorry I did. I am no prude. I enjoy a little excitement and don't mind a social evening with a few friends, but it doesn't pay to do things you despise yourself for the next day."

"But," put in his friend, with a quizzical look, "do you know you are preaching a sermon, and I rather like it, too? It sets me thinking. As for such girls as we wined, I don't care a rap for them. If I could find any other and better amusement they might go hang for all I care. I try tennis and golf with fellows and girls in our set, but that is tame sport. I go to 'functions' once in awhile, and if I dance twice with a pretty girl who has no doubt mother glares at me and says I've no family pride. Most of the girls talk silly nonsense that wears a fellow, and the more passive they are the worse they gush. The only thing I really enjoy is yachting, and then I have trouble to find good fellows who have time to go with me. Once in awhile I get disgusted with myself and wish I had to work for a living."

Albert looked surprised. Was it possible that this young and handsome fellow, with dark brown honest eyes, curly black hair and garb and manner of refinement, who never had known what it was to work, really wanted to earn his own way in the world, just from sheer ennui?

"It seems to me you have everything to be thankful for, Frank," Albert said at last in a dejected tone—"a kind father, good home, plenty of friends, a nice yacht, all the money you want and nothing to do. With me it is different. Would it bore you if I unloaded a little of my history?"

"Not a bit," answered Frank. "I would really like to hear it."

"Well," continued Albert, "when we were at college I was a little too proud to let you know I was the only son of a poor widow who was denying herself every luxury to educate me, but it was a fact. After we separated I tutored some, read law and was admitted to the bar. I opened an office in my native town and wasted a year waiting for clients, while I read novels, sketched and fished to pass the time. Last June my mother died and left my sister and me an old home that had been in the family over a century, a few acres of meadow lands and maybe \$200 in debts. Then I wrote to you. I was more than grateful for the chance you obtained for me to work for even such a man as Frye. I am paying those debts as fast as I can, and my sister is helping by teaching in a crossroad schoolhouse and walking four miles each day to do it."

"And I coaxed you to go out and spend money on a couple of ballet girls!" responded Frank regretfully. "Say, old man," reaching out his hand and clasping Albert's, "if I had known all this that evening I would have bitten my tongue before I asked you to go with me."

"That is all right," replied Albert. "I should have told you that night what I have told you now, but maybe I was a little ashamed to do so."

"I would like to see that brave sister of yours," said Frank after a pause. "From what you tell me, she must be a trump."

Albert made no answer, but going to the mantel he took a framed photograph that stood there and handed it to his friend. It was a picture of a young girl with a face like an artist's dream and eyes like two pansies.

Frank gazed at it long and earnestly. "Your sister, I suppose," he said at last, still looking at the face. "I do not wonder you preached me the sermon you have this evening. You must be proud of her."

When it came time for him to go the two shook hands with a warmer clasp than ever, and when he was gone the little room did not seem quite so cheerless to its occupant as before.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHOULD like to be excused tomorrow forenoon, Mr. Frye," said Albert a few days later. "Frank has promised to introduce me to his father."

"Certainly," replied Frye cheerfully. "Take the entire day if you wish, and if you have a good chance try to make the acquaintance of the young lady of whom I spoke to you, or at least take a good look at her. She is the key that will unlock the information I need, and I shall depend upon you to obtain it."

"I will keep my eyes open," replied Albert aloud, mentally resolving that it would not be in the interest of Frye and his sinister plot. The next day he met Frank by appointment, and the two called upon John Nason at his office. Albert was greeted cordially, and after an exchange of commonplaces soon found himself being interrogated by a series of questions pertaining to his home and college life, his knowledge of law and law men, his present employer. They were for a purpose, as all of John Nason's business questions were, and at their conclusion he said:

(To Be Continued.)